

## CALIFORNIA'S LEAGUE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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### INTRODUCTORY NOTE

*Doctor Terry's remarkably able review of some of the important work of the League for the Conservation of Public Health should inspire every true physician to renewed efforts in the public welfare. It outlines an amazing record of a unique and remarkable organization devoted solely to the interests of better health for all Californians.*

*The weakest link in the forward march of applied medicine is admittedly the lack of sufficiently cohesive intelligent action. Retail medicine as practiced by individual doctors for individual patients is advancing faster than is mass medicine for the masses. This latter field of applied public health is so intricately honeycombed with associations and organizations, political, altruistic, mercenary, and what not, that they get into each other's way and slow up progress. They fail to combine on most matters of moment and consequently they accomplish little in those places where accomplishments are wisely effective.*

*The League for the Conservation of Public Health has done, and is doing, more intelligently effective work for the cause of better health than are all other groups combined. It has done and is doing more to cement worthwhile individual doctors together so as to bring coherent mass action to bear upon the vital problems of health than is any other influence. Its membership includes only the kind of doctors we all wish we were and strive to be. The other kind—and they are few—are its enemies, which is the greatest compliment the League could have. There are classes and classes of doctors as there are classes and classes of other people. The League membership roll comes nearer being a directory of the kind of doctors another doctor wants when he is ill, or who are sure to be as interested in public health as they are in the personal health of their individual patients, than any other group anywhere.*

*An occasional doctor—usually an uninformed or disgruntled one—wants to know why the California Medical Association cannot do all the things that the League does. Any thinking person would find enough of an answer by reading the constitution of the California Medical Association. The House of Delegates several years ago were so favorably impressed with the work of the League that they unanimously invited the League to act as the California Medical Association's section on Medical Economics, Hospitals, Public Health, Medical Legislation, and similar matters. This fine co-operative spirit has continued to produce the most effective kind of harmonious team work.*

*Better Health magazine and the Better Health Service are the most effective answer that has been provided anywhere to the justifiable demand for authoritative information about health for the man on the street. The secret of that success, as Doctor Terry says, is impersonal service given out under the name of an organization rather than by any one man. That it is effective, is most amply demonstrated by the more than 100,000 letters of inquiry, comment, and commendation its editors have received and answered in the last four years.*

*Not only every physician, but every other person genuinely interested in the health welfare of his fellow-men should read Doctor Terry's able analysis of the doings of the League for the Conservation of Public Health.—*  
EDITOR.

SOME ten years ago the medical profession of California was faced with a momentous question of medical economics. An imported plan for the medical and hospital care of a large percentage of the population was plausibly presented and actively promoted by prominent doctors and laymen with the support of influential official groups. Social Health Insurance was the attractive name of a "panel system," which, it was claimed, would im-

prove medical service and solve the financial problems of physicians and patients.

The doctors divided and disagreed upon the question, and debates before the various societies produced much heat, but little light. Leaders of the American Medical Association, including the president, were outspoken in favor of the measure. The California State Medical Society remained neutral and declined to oppose social health insurance. The advocates of the new proposition were naturally confident because they had the distinct advantage of organization, "statistical" reports, publicity and official endorsement. The question became a burning issue and, after several years of propaganda, the legislature was induced to place social health insurance upon the ballot as a constitutional amendment to be decided at the general election November 8, 1918, by the vote of the people of California.

Some of the doctors who believed that the movement was a menace, and that the compulsory, paternalistic measure proposed would not only undermine the efficient voluntary hospital and medical service of California, but also take away the individual independence of the doctors, resolved that something had to be done to defeat the measure. They recognized, however, that resolutions were futile, and that to make their opposition effective they must have an organization to conduct an aggressive campaign. They realized that to depend upon other organizations that were dividing and confusing the issue would get them nowhere. And so it happened that leading members of the medical profession of Southern, Central, and Northern California organized the League for the Conservation of Public Health.

### DEFEAT OF SOCIAL HEALTH INSURANCE

How efficient the League was in conducting that decisive statewide campaign, and how effective its publicity and literature proved, can all be summed up in the single statement: The League defeated social health insurance, despite all its propaganda, official endorsements and influential backing, by the conclusive majority of 224,466.

The sound judgment of the doctors of California in forming an independent organization was vindicated. The practical need and value of such an organization was quickly recognized, and so the League for the Conservation of Public Health has continued to meet its growing responsibilities with increasing effectiveness.

Since its first statewide campaign eight years ago, the League has blazed many a pathway in the field of publicity, legislation, medical economics, education, and hospital betterment. Its activities have steadily increased in response to urgent demands for its co-operation and counsel. The purposes of the League, as summarized on the organization's letterhead, are: To spread wider and more accurate knowledge of what scientific medicine is doing and can do for the promotion of health, the prevention, control and limitation of the various diseases; to counteract pernicious propaganda and warn the people of the dangers of quackery by presenting reliable information through Better Health, Better Health Service, and other proper channels of publicity; to encourage the enactment and enforcement

of better health laws; to promote and maintain more and better hospitals wherein educated physicians may render better service to every community of California. This is the constructive program upon which the League rests its right to claim the approval of the public and the profession. It is a worthy program, and it demands an efficient organization to carry it on worthily. Each of the several types of service which the League renders requires specialized knowledge, experience, and executive ability. Doctors, more than any other group, appreciate the need for training, information, special data, and thorough examination before making a diagnosis. To diagnose a publicity problem, a legislative problem, a problem that may involve the changing of public opinion, or of official attitude, or of community sentiment or prejudice, or a mass of more or less unsound views, or finding and informing the factors that make or break any movement—these things often require much investigation and a more searching history than is often needed for the diagnosis of hidden troubles of an individual patient.

The progress of medical science, of medical colleges, hospitals, laboratories, health departments, and all agencies of scientific health work are becoming more and more dependent upon the education of the public, the action of legislatures and the co-operation of communities. It is generally acknowledged that the medical profession has ample scientific knowledge and experience now at hand, if it were universally applied, or even accepted by the vast majority of people, to prolong the average human life many years and make all the years more efficient and happy. The development of the League is bound up with the welfare of California, for as the League's slogan aptly expresses it, "The Health of the People is the Wealth of the State."

#### PUBLICITY MOULDS PUBLIC OPINION

Public opinion is the most potent force in putting "over" or putting "under" any movement. Public opinion cannot be reduced to charts, curves and cycles, but it can be fairly well gauged by a student of publicity who can diagnose its trends and who has newspaper experience in analyzing its growth, climax, and decline, and can interpret the behavior of crowds. The most powerful moulder of public opinion is publicity, and it can be made the strongest ally of scientific medicine. There is plenty of evidence that the misrepresentation and misinformation that is constantly being spread by anti-scientific groups in scores of magazines and hundreds of newspapers is undermining public confidence in scientific medicine. Busy doctors have been so preoccupied and so self-satisfied that they have overlooked the trouble-making possibilities of the cults and their growing capacity to handicap and hinder the practice and progress of medicine.

A national magazine stated last year, after a survey of the second largest city of the United States, that only 33 per cent of the people, when sick, relied upon the services of educated physicians. The other 67 per cent divided their patronage among the various cults, charlatans, religious healers, physical culturists, semi-educated practitioners, patent medicine vendors, and what not. The commercial

success of the anti-scientific forces was attributed to publicity and political activity.

The League has proven in California that most people prefer authoritative information on health subjects when they understand where to get it and what "authoritative" is. The public cannot co-operate intelligently with the medical profession without the facts, and the facts must be presented in language they can understand. We have no reason to fear the verdict of fair-minded people when they know the facts.

The League, through its Better Health Service, which is published every day of the year, is furnishing the facts to hundreds of thousands of readers of what scientific medicine is prepared to do for the promotion of health and the prevention, control, cure, and relief of sickness. "Give the people the light," said Dante, "and they will find their own way."

To answer pernicious propaganda through medical journals is ineffective, for the laity do not read them. It may be answered effectively in two ways: through the newspaper, which is the daily textbook of the people, or through a popular magazine sold at news stands. The League does both and has won the highest commendation of leading publishers, editors, officials, doctors, educators, legislators, and thousands of appreciative letters from readers generally. The League is giving the medical profession publicity that is creating good-will that cannot be bought at any price.

It is obvious that the quality of service which the League is giving newspapers cannot be handled as a side issue or in haphazard fashion. We know that spasmodic articles can accomplish very little, and that we must not only inform the public, but keep on informing them.

#### BETTER HEALTH SERVICE

Better Health Service is more than the stereotyped newspaper articles on health subjects that are mere expressions of opinion of individual writers. The Better Health Service, organized by the League, struck the keynote for the new order of impersonal publicity. As all the other League activities, its popular newspaper service is entirely impersonal, which has won for it the widest approval and support of the medical profession. The impersonal policy overcomes the very proper objection leveled at many newspaper health columns that exploit and advertise individual doctors.

In looking over the four past years of the League's daily and Sunday Better Health Service, we find hundreds of valuable messages on important aspects of medical work that serve to clear up misunderstandings, correct misinformation, and place convincing facts before the people. The articles and answers are not theoretical or technical, but contain the kind of practical and reliable information that the reading public needs and wants. Over three hundred leading surgeons and physicians, dentists, health authorities and specialists in the various branches and fields of medical, hospital, and public health work, contribute to the League's Better Health Service.

Thousands of letters are received by the Better

Health Service, which give an index to what people are saying and thinking about doctors, hospitals, clinics, welfare movements, etc. The questions asked and the answers given to the questions react further and touch deeper than anyone unfamiliar with the active interest of the public in health subjects may think.

It is a fine thing for the public as well as for the profession to have such a reliable health service, and the people appreciate it. But it must not be overlooked that the League's daily and Sunday Better Health Service demands a vast amount of tireless and unrespired hard work, both daily and Sunday. Its responsibilities are always great and sometimes grave. The opportunities for costly mistakes are ever present. That none have occurred in four years of steady work, is a sufficient endorsement of the high quality of the service and the care and capacity of its management.

The publicity service of the League embraces more than furnishing material to the press and magazines. The League is on terms of cordial co-operation with the press and often is called upon for information, and many times keeps sincere editors from being imposed upon by new "cures" and old frauds.

#### PIONEER POPULAR HEALTH MAGAZINE

Some essential health, hospital, and medical subjects cannot be adequately discussed in mass-circulation newspapers. It is obvious that many newspapers do not wish to lose certain advertisers and subscribers. The League established the pioneer popular health magazine, *BETTER HEALTH*, to supplement the Better Health Service. Its title is considered so valuable, as it so appropriately expresses the magazine's mission, that not a few have tried to borrow, buy, or steal it. It is a different kind of magazine from any published, and it does not duplicate or imitate any other periodical. *BETTER HEALTH* has no trammeling connections whatsoever. It knows and reflects California, although there is nothing provincial about it.

At the 1925 session of the legislature, and during several previous sessions, the League's position on important bills was clearly set forth in *BETTER HEALTH*. Leading legislators expressed approval and appreciation of this valuable service. In every session of the legislature bills are introduced that are highly prejudicial to medical practice, medical research, to the teaching of medicine, to hospital administration, nursing education and public health protection. I cannot attempt to give in this paper a detailed review or even a complete outline of the work which the League has done during the last four sessions of the legislature. It would require a series of papers to do the subject justice. The records show that much dangerous legislation which would have jeopardized important health agencies would have passed if the League were not on the job, and a number of constructive measures would have been defeated without League support. Time and again the League has been called upon by hospitals, medical colleges, groups of doctors, nurses, dentists, veterinarians, public health officials, social workers, women's clubs, and other groups interested

in some angle of health work. When the League is convinced it has always responded effectively.

#### SOME LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

I can mention only a few of the long list of legislative activities of the League: In two statewide campaigns and in three legislative sessions, the League opposed anti-vivisection. People throughout the country were profoundly concerned in the outcome, for a victory by the anti-vivisectionists would nullify the advances made by scientific medicine in recent decades. In each instance the League won by an impressive vote. A measure which Illinois permitted to pass was introduced as an economy measure by the administration here to combine and place the Board of Medical Examiners, Board of Dental Examiners, Board of Optometrists, State Board of Embalmers, Board of Examiners in Veterinary Medicine, Board of Pharmacy, boards of architecture, librarians, accountancy, all in one Department of Professional Standards. The law provided that a layman was to be appointed director of the new department by the Governor, with full power to issue licenses to practice for all professions and to suspend and revoke licenses. The League's courage to challenge, and its judgment in fighting and defeating this dangerous measure, is now acknowledged by all. In the last session of the legislature a measure was offered by a certain cult that would have made treatment by prayer or any spiritual means a sufficient and full compliance with all the provisions of the Workmen's Compensation Act. If adopted, it would have demoralized industrial, medical and hospital service and added to the complicated problems of industry, additional health hazards and controversial religious problems. Under the provisions of the Act, spiritual healers of any and all sects could treat cuts, breaks, fractures, lead poisoning, hernia, valvular heart defects, tuberculosis, defective vision, burns, syphilis, communicable and infectious diseases, and all the shocks and ailments that industry is heir to. One would think that manufacturers, insurance companies, labor organizations, railroads, and those who know the constant need of medical and surgical service in industry would hasten to Sacramento to fight a measure that affected them so vitally. The reverse was the case. The fighting was left to the League. The proposed law was defeated by a very narrow margin. Bills to unionize nurses, x-ray bills, bills that would license persons to practice without adequate education, milk bills that would impose costly and unnecessary requirements on hospitals, hospital bills that would jeopardize the interests of worthy hospitals and their patients, many kinds of disguised paternalistic measures, anti-health bills of all varieties were successfully opposed by the League.

Constructive legislation to provide adequate facilities for the study and treatment of mental diseases, to provide better hospital service for the needy sick, to surround the title of doctor with definite legal safeguards and protect the public from misrepresentation, imposition and fraud of advertising doctors, legislation to meet the demands of the research, laboratory, anatomical and other departments of the medical colleges of California, anti-diploma mill bills were promoted by the League. On the agitated

question of narcotic drug addiction the League has done a great deal of investigating, held conferences and co-operated with groups intelligently and seriously interested in handling the problem under proper institutional conditions medically supervised. The League sponsored and passed the first anesthetic bill passed anywhere. A new optometry bill was passed which restored rights to oculists and other physicians and removed arbitrary regulations from skilled manufacturing opticians. The old law created a virtual commercial monopoly in favor of optometrists, and oculists keenly felt its unfair restrictions on their practice. How profitably certain groups of optometrists used the old law was made clear. The optometry law just passed curbs the monopoly of the optometrists, and is of benefit not only to physicians, but to their patients who must wear and pay for glasses.

#### THE PENALTY OF LEADERSHIP

The League is not boastful, as it realizes that all victories are temporary, and that eternal vigilance is the price of medical freedom, the same as it is the price of commercial, religious, and political freedom. At intervals, some disgusted doctor, after reviewing the many quacks, fakes, anti-medical movements and the many problems that remain unsolved asks, "What's the use? Cultists continue to multiply, the politicians continue to side-step, the public is indifferent, and why should we worry about what happens to our successors?"

In all other fields the people bear the burdens of their day. The penalty of leadership is to meet constant opposition. In all contests competitors try to knock the leaders off their pedestals. This can be escaped only by those who avoid responsibilities.

A few seem to think that quackery is benefited and not injured by adverse legislation and publicity. They assert that if physicians were rendering the high type of service that we should render that there would be no room for quackery, and it would disappear from lack of patronage. This viewpoint is unsound and contrary to direct and collateral evidence. It is not alone in the field of medicine, in the selecting of doctors, that people make serious mistakes. There is nothing wrong with the legal coin of our country minted by the Government; nevertheless, counterfeiters unopposed and unexposed would flourish and pass spurious coinage and victimize many in every community. No thoughtful person interprets the fact that billions of dollars are wasted annually in wildcat schemes and on worthless stocks as a reflection on the standard stocks that are as good as gold. The Government knows and financiers appreciate that they must keep the public informed and be vigilant themselves when laws are being made which they must observe. Without information, without the facts, the public has no way of distinguishing the true from the false, the counterfeit doctor from a genuine physician. When the profession is indifferent to what the public thinks, it follows naturally that the public becomes indifferent to what the profession thinks.

The League's influence at the legislature and on political thought has increased steadily because it has acquired the reputation of fairness, accuracy, and fearlessness. One of the chief reasons why the

League has been so surprisingly right on most questions is that it consults so many sources and gets information and opinions from all angles. The League never endorses, advocates or opposes a bill or a policy until it has examined the various sources of information. The League takes time to gather evidence and does not try to force its opinion or conclusions on anyone. It submits them with candor on their merit. One thing is sure, the League is not afraid to act, and it does not act one thing and believe another.

A discussion of men and measures at the League office is always illuminating. It brings out angles, background, motives, inducements, financial interests, fraternal, club and social ties in significant relationships. The League is a clearing house of legislative information and can tell you why certain legislators voted for and against measures and why certain doctors were neutral and the reason for the opposition of others. Why one organization reversed itself three times on one measure and why some chambers of commerce were silent and others endorsed the cult viewpoint on legislation. Lincoln once said: "Now, there's Mr. ——. He thinks he is fooling me. I let him think so, but I don't let him fool me." It must be borne in mind that much of the information received by the League is confidential, and will be used only in the interests of its service, but will not be disclosed.

#### HOSPITAL BETTERMENT SERVICE

The League has confidential information about hospitals, for instance, which, if blazoned forth, would be a seven-day sensation and do irreparable damage. But the League Hospital Betterment Service is constructive and works for the benefit of all. In addition to the important legislative and publicity work which the League does for hospitals, it answers numerous calls for assistance from all parts of the state and on all sorts of problems, from expansion and new construction to reorganization of staff, school of nursing, record systems and questions relating to every other department. "Hospital betterment" is a term coined by the League, and in California means service—active and operative every hour of the day and night to every patient in the hospital.

When the League began its hospital betterment work in 1918 no one had collected the facts about ownership, costs, number of beds or where new hospitals were most needed, and no one had sufficient information to even guess at the character of service which the hospitals of California were rendering or prepared to render to the people of the state. There was no generally accepted definition of what a hospital should be, no comprehensive record policy, accounting system, and no firm policy with regard to cults. In the October issue of BETTER HEALTH the foresight of the League on this dangerous question is shown in the article on page 401, entitled "Invasion of Hospitals by the Cults."

The first convention of the hospitals of California was called by and held under the auspices of the League for the Conservation of Public Health, and these annual hospital conventions are proving of the utmost interest and benefit to the directors, admin-

istrators, staff, nurses, and technicians in solving common hospital problems.

A Certificate of Honor, signed by Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur as president of the American Medical Association, was awarded "The League for the Conservation of Public Health for the exhibit relating to hospital betterment, Better Health Service, the state campaigns for high standards of medical practice and for the improvement of laws relating to preventive medicine and the prevention of legislation that would lower the standards of health and retard the progress of medicine."

#### EXTENSION OF "CALIFORNIA PLAN"

One of the distinct services of the League has been to inspire doctors of other states to organize along the lines of the "California Plan." Responding to repeated invitations from leading doctors of Oregon and Washington representatives of the California League went to those states some years ago, held conferences, addressed the doctors of Seattle, Bellingham, Tacoma, Spokane, Yakima, Portland, and other places and started their leagues. Doctors from many states regularly visit the League office and receive practical illustrations of how the "California Plan" produces results. California, because of its composite, cosmopolitan, changing citizenship, its great area, embracing all climates the year round, has more new and complex problems, "hold-overs" brought here from other states, than any other place. It is the greatest experimental field for health and anti-health movements of all kinds. Health insurance skipped all the other states and came to California, anti-vivisectionists selected California for their first statewide campaign, and the anti-vaccinationists followed suit. It is observed that where good grain grows profusely weeds will also flourish.

The California League is often called upon and is always glad to give counsel to other organizations, but it assumes no responsibility and believes that all should settle their local troubles according to their own devices. It is obvious that in the last analysis each state must work out its own salvation. No plan or method of organization is automatic or will work uniformly under different conditions with changed personnel. It is proverbial that doctors disagree, but in California this proverb is disproved.

For those who may wish to look upon the darker side of the picture I answer the question, "Has the League no faults and no enemies?" Surely. It is made up of human beings, and to err is human. No human organization can function with 100 per cent efficiency at all times. The best surgeons do not cure all their patients, and every doctor loses fights for the lives of patients, and scientific medicine is confronted with many problems it has failed to solve. If the League were composed of steel parts it might function automatically. But a machine is not open to suggestions, and the League is always. It is safe to say that the League officials are more aware than their critics of the measure by which they fall short of perfection. It is absolutely safe to state that they would welcome nothing better

than constructive help and suggestions to enable the League to render better service.

#### EIGHT YEARS OF PRACTICAL WORK

The League has opposed and defeated very active groups. It has made enemies as well as friends, because it does so much. All the cults are unanimously against it, some hospitals that prefer to run loosely, others who dwell in the twilight zone and officials and politicians who want to be half-quack and half-scientific to get the votes of all, and a few who do not understand why the practical every-day work of the League is necessary, because they themselves are such successful doctors and have "arrived" and are not troubled by or interested in the problems of those who are only on their way or just about to start. It is a common fault of successful men in all walks of life to play lone hands and let the devil take the hindmost. It is pleasant, therefore, to say that most of the work of the League is done by men whose position in medicine and in the community is assured, whose practices and income are large and who are dedicating part of their time to this public service with no personal or selfish purpose whatsoever. They give up a lot of time to League work, dig up information, articles for the press, iron out troubles of different groups, help elect better legislators and other officials, keep abreast of things that are happening on questions that affect directly or indirectly the field of medical practice, give a helping hand to the younger men and pay their own good money for the privilege of serving others. With such examples of service, we may look with confident optimism to the future of the League. The officers and personnel of the League, on the whole, constitute a body of men and women in whose ability and integrity the public and the profession can place trust and confidence.

What one finds in the final summing up is, the "California Plan" of the League for the Conservation of Public Health has aroused other organizations in other states to a larger sense of leadership and public responsibility. Eight years of service in California have proven its practical value in constructive publicity, in better health service, in hospital betterment work, in promoting good measures and movements, and preventing bad legislation. The ideals and spirit of co-operation of the League and its conceptions of public responsibilities are fundamentally sound. The process by which it has developed and carried on its varied activities is a gradual one, but it is, nevertheless, sure. Its influence in moulding a healthier public opinion for the benefit of all worthy health agencies is growing greater and more extensive. Its scope of service has broadened and bettered each year. It is a very busy organization with daily work that counts for steady progress. It is giving every worthy work valuable publicity except its own. It is too busy with much serving to tell us its own story, and that is what prompted me to review some of the important work of this unique organization. The League's record reflects great credit upon the ability and willingness of the doctors of California to work together for the common benefit of the public and the profession.